∞∞ The most important family member may have a mantle of deer or nutria skins to keep him warm.

C M 175 291 "The men usually go about stark naked without a stitch on, although their skins are so tanned by the rough weather that they seem to be covered by animal hide or leather, particularly the old men, who are numerous, because the inclemencies of weather do not harm them, they having been used to such rigors since childhood. I saw in Santa Fé the head of a Mocobí Indian, who must have been about 40 years old, the skin of which was more than half a finger thick. The women go about entirely covered, from head to toe, in animal skins, and the principal women attire themselves in cloth made from a pliant plant larger than the agave, which in this province is called "chaguar" and grows wild. From it they make a thread similar to that used by cobblers, and then weave their clothes to which the daughters and wives of the more important men add some black and white ornamentation. From this same fibre they also make jars which, C M [415] cemented over with wax, can hold water pretty well and also the beverages with which they get drunk.

C M 302 175 [304] "All the women paint their faces, breasts and arms in the same manner as the moorish women of Africa and Spain, and those of most consequence do this in intricate patterns which remain in the skin permanently, for their mothers from the day they are born start to fix the dyes in their very flesh with the help of the large sharp bones of certain fish. They also use a dark blue dye, although not to such an extent, on their male children. In addition to this the mothers pluck the hair from the heads of their children of both sexes, leaving a completely bald swath three fingers wide running from the forehead to the crown of the head on which the hair never grows again. Thus do the Mocobíes, Tobas, Agoyas, Taymies and Aquilotes go about, both men and women, and the latter are extremely ugly as a consequence although, to their thinking, they are very beautiful. And in order that the women pull their hair out, the Devil is wont to appear to them in the form of an Indian woman who comes out of the nearest forest covered with a net and tells them that those who will not allow themselves to be plucked are not to eat fish, for should they do so, they will die. [577] So that if some C M [262] woman, fearing the pain, resists having her hair pulled, she later allows it so as to be able to eat fish which is their favorite food. Others of these Indian nations do not make these pathlike inroads in

415 "The best pieces of equipment of which they can boast are
923 some small vessels of "palo santo" [lignum vital—a kind of wood--Translator] and a few small clay pots with very narrow mouths and two little handles which serve them as water flasks on their frequent raiding forays."

"Men and women alike shave their heads completely. They
302 use, for that purpose, the sharp jaw of a certain fish, and their own teeth serve them to pare their nails. They cover themselves as best
291 they are able from their waists to their knees. The men, on gala
296 occasions, often wear a sort of sleeveless jacket and hang a kind of
415 bag from one shoulder in which they keep a crude wooden pipe, fire
[276] making equipment and other nicknacks. Both the bag and the coat are knitted, made from agave or chaguar fiber, and curiously marked.
302 They pull out their beards, eyelashes and eyebrows, and either to improve their looks or in order to appear more terrible in battle, they blacken their faces and chests with coal dust."

"Their favorite food is fish, and lacking this, all kinds of wild
262 fruits or roots other than the poisonous ones. Their principal vegetable food, on which they can count for a quarter of each year and which they store to some small extent, is the fruit of the algarrobo, chañar and mistol. They also eat, and that without repugnance, lizards, locusts, crickets [593], mice, and even eggs after they have been abandoned, together with other filth. They eat fish and any other kind of meat
[252] or roots, roasted or boiled, and know of no other way of preparing food.
[261] They can withstand hunger admirably, and when they are unable to get other food they spend their time lying about chewing some herb or leaf from the forest."

"From the algarroba [pod which grows on the algarrobo tree--
273 Translator] they make a beverage which is extremely delicious to their
579 taste and which intoxicates them and makes them very fierce. Their drunken parties almost always end in a fierce fight which would have dire results were it not that the women, who never drink of that liquor, are careful to hide the arrows and all other offensive weapons and to hold back and separate those engaged in fighting."

"When the algarroba starts to turn yellow, they place in a cen-
533 tral place among the huts, the pimpin, which is a log, concave at its
222 upper end, covered with a piece of hide. A drummer with a belt about

533 his waist from which hang a number of shells, claws, little horns,
222 teeth and similar trifles, beats on that rustic drum day and night without ceasing and, with the continous movement of his body, makes the trinkets about his waist rattle all this accompanied by a song or rather a lugubrious and high-pitched shouting which can be heard at a great distance. This ridiculous performance is not a simple demonstration of rejoining but rather, in their opinion, a rite necessary to hasten the ripening of the longed for and beneficent fruit."

"When a woman arrives from the forest laden with fruit, roots
222 or other eatables, all the other women of the village crowd to her
262 hut and she, after having set aside enough for the sustenance of her family, distributes the rest, the other women not saying a word of
[626] showing any sign of appreciation. Were she to refrain from giving away her surplus, it would cause the greatest displeasure, and might even provoke some dangerous quarrel."

"The Mataguayos are timid and cowardly, but vengeful in
181 the extreme. They never forget an offense—sooner or later they will
[671] be avenged. The law of requital is unbreakable for them. They avoid making war when this is possible, but if they are attacked they
[411] defend themselves. Their most common weapon is the arrow."

"They recognize no authority and no law. The child obeys
593 its parents if it wishes to and the latter, though they may love their children, have no power at all over them. Nevertheless one does not generally encounter lack of respect toward the old or toward the unfortunate." [594]

"The men busy themselves with fishing and only very rarely
462 indulge in hunting. Their agricultural activities are limited to the
[241] sowing of a few clumps of pumpkins and watermelons. With the
[283] juice of the latter they make aloja. Some of them also devote their time to making thin ropes of agave fiber with which they construct their nets."

"All other work is done by the women. She must not only prepare the food but also fetch fruit and roots from the forest; not only bring water but also chop firewood; not only look after the cleanliness of the hut but also make it. In one word: she is a slave."

"When a girl reaches nubility she is hidden in a corner of the
881 hut and covered with fronds and rags. It is illicit for her to speak to anybody or taste meat or fish for a determined length of time. Meanwhile a drummer goes through the same ceremony in front of her

411 "Their weapons comprise arrows, spear and club, and those who cannot procure iron spears attach a sharp piece of deer antler to the end of a pole. Their occupations are limited to a little hunting; 221 262 to fishing, to which end in some places they customarily make nets of [227] garabata fiber; to gathering a few wild fruits, and to loafing. For this reason their food consists of a little meat from the wild animals they hunt, fish and fruits. These latter they gather abundantly during some months of the year, although the variety is limited mainly to the fruit of the chañar, mistol, and algarrobo. Fish is also plentiful in certain seasons. Game, on the other hand, is relatively scarce but they eat anything which is in any way similar to meat with relish, such as small lizards, crickets, locusts and mice (1) so that although

1. That is: cavies, which are very good to eat when fat (J.P.)

they do get rather thin in certain months by reason of the scarceness 231 of food, no one dies of starvation. Some, but [600] very few, raise sheep and other domestic animals. In any event, when times are hard, and even when they are not so hard, the frontier Christians have pretty large cattle herds, herds which often help the Matacos out when food is scarce, and this with little effort. Most of them refrain from 241 agricultural pursuits because that would involve too much work (in the Mataco opinion), except for some perfunctory sowing of pumpkins which grow with astonishing ease in those parts and in such abundance and such high quality that some frontier people, with a little exaggeration, used to tell me that they were so delicious that it was a pleasure to see and taste them and that their honey-like sweetness was such that when one wished to cut one open the knife would become stuck fast in them. I observed that while these people were telling me about the pumpkins their mouths would begin to water, so much so that I was almost persuaded to go off and live in those places where such delicious and mellifluous pumpkins grew and multiplied so easily."

273 "From wild fruits and even from pumpkins and watermelons they 579 make a fermented beverage which they like very much but which intoxicates them powerfully; and in their fury they join in some very bloody frays. This is why the women abstain completely from drinking that beverage and hide their husbands' weapons during those periods

C
721 belongings, they try to despoil it by surprise. These actions are always followed by deaths, wounds and imprisonment, which are cause enough for new wars, made without warning, to which end each has informers and spies in the other camp.

Fortune has for a long time favored the Tobas who occupy the best lands, that is, those bordering on the Paraná and Paraguay rivers for about sixty leagues inland and for hundreds of leagues along the rivers' courses; furthermore because of clandestine commerce with Corrientes and the Republic of Paraguay these Indians have been able to secure some firearms, and as they are the furthest away from the white man's ever closing ring, they naturally receive an appreciable contingent of rascals who are attempting to escape from them.

This is why the Vilelas and Chulupíes have become mixed in with the Tobas, which the Mocovíes, who used to live in the Southwest, in direct contact with the Santa Fe and Santiago frontiers, are also doing and who furthermore have so much in common with them as regards language -- for I have found among them many identical words. This very thing is what is happening to the Matacos.

Chapter II

Physical Characteristics of the Matacos

M
142 The physical differences between the Tobas and the Matacos are noteworthy. Generally speaking, the Mataco is half a hand's breadth shorter than the Toba, though this does not mean that he is a small man when compared to us. He has an extraordinarily deep chest, a bull-like neck and well developed muscles; he is thick set, his head large, his face broad and with very salient cheekbones.

They have long lower jaws, very much inclined downwards; their foreheads are hardly ever broad but often seem even smaller than they are in reality because of their unkempt hair. Their feet are medium sized, their hands small, well formed and admirably joined to the
M arm, especially in the women; the hair on their faces is scanty. Of
142 their thirty-two teeth, the canines have seemed to me, in general
● 262 very little pronounced, which may have its explanation in the fact

142 that they habitually eat fish and fruit and very little meat, with some
[262] exceptions. The teeth in the young are good and whole, but in older persons they are either lacking or are worn down [175] and ugly. The enamel on their teeth is not, in my opinion, like ours, its whiteness is the whiteness of bone, and not of ivory, and I am almost at the point of believing that it is less resistant. Their gums and lips are of a faded pink color. Can this be caused by their diet? They do not eat
[263] salt because they do not have it, but they like it very much and relish it as though it were sugar when they are given some. Their lips are thick, somewhat protruding and turned outwards. Almost all of them have slightly slanted eyes, the lower apex inclined towards the nose in the shape of an almond -- there are some, though, who have round, horizontal eyes, which are inky black, the whites looking as though someone had put a little blueing into them; while the whites of the slanted eyes have seemed to me often to have a bilious greenish shade to them, especially among the aged.

Their noses are long, straight and flattened, the nostrils also flattened and extraordinarily wide, but not snubbed. This business of
[262] snubnoses is one of their great worries, so much so that they will not eat mutton because they assert that doing so would make their noses take the shape of sheep noses. This is a trick of their medical quacks and
[756] witch doctors who, in order to prevent the destruction of their flocks and with them the loss of the little wool which they weave and is useful to them, have invented this pious deception so similar to others which are familiar to us. So it is that all of us all over the world and in all periods are alike in matters of artfulness and pride.

Their hair is straight and coarse, but in a very few individuals I have noted slightly wavy hair, almost kinky, though I know not whether it be so naturally or artificially. I have also noticed, in some, incipient baldness. The hair of adult individuals is jet black,
[165] and white among the aged, but this is not often encountered, I suppose because only rarely do they achieve any age to speak of. Among children up to ten or twelve years old the hair is often reddish which is a strange phenomenon and calls to mind Salles' theory that primitive man must have had red hair. We may have here an example of
302 [165] atavism. They wear their hair long and unkempt, but cut it short for a whole year when in mourning. This does not mean that they do not

head and at the foot of their rustic bed they hang their possessions, 352
such as their bags, nets, etc., and some of their weapons. They sometimes stick four forked sticks into the ground, to a height of about a hand breadth above the surface, at the four corners of the bed, place two poles crosswise upon them and upon these, lengthwise, the necessary number of slats to make a sort of bedspring on which to spread skins and blankets. This type of bed is used particularly in the summer time in order to be cooler and to be free of insects and poisonous reptiles. The whites also customarily do the same thing, but they elevate their beds to a height of one or two meters above the ground to escape from tigers [jaguars--Translator]. I have slept on all of these types of beds and give my assurance that it is all a matter of habit -- nevertheless one can sleep much more comfortably on the ground. When the Indians break camp they burn all their huts.

In Mataco, "hut" or "house" is said in two ways: "hauet" and 196
"hepp" ("h" as in the German "haus" or "c" in "Florence"). Now "hepp" also means "smoke," "steam," "mist" and a kind of plant which looks like mist at a distance; "hepp" is also the name of steamship. And now, begging the reader's indulgence, is not the analogy perfect between this Mataco idiom and ours: calling the family or house "home" and a steamship "steam"? This is one more mental approximation between the Mataco man and the Aryan man.

The spear is stood upright at the entrance to the house, and to 411
one side are the bow and arrows, which lend a certain warlike appearance which [178] is pleasing. The houses are not constructed 361
symmetrically, but nevertheless an attempt is made to leave, between each row of huts, a wide street-like space.

It is a pleasure to see their fires when they are cooking. On the 252
very top are earthenware pots which contain various roots and wild 262
fruits, which usually need several changes of water. Among these there is a type of bean which is both good and palatable, and a root which is between a sweet potato and an Irish potato. The pots are 323
made and fire-hardened by the Indian women, who work them with care.

When the time for eating arrives, which, in the camp, is usu- 264
ally at eleven A.M. and at nightfall, fish on spits are brought out [252]
and crackle and hiss and smoke and drip in a way to make one's mouth water. On occasion a piece of meat from some animal will grace the 262

table, or a guinea pig, which are excellent tidbits, though the lack of salt makes culinary success doubtful for one who has been used to it from the very baptismal font.

The Indians like a white person to be free and easy with them and to appreciate their things. So it was that I, when I was in their camps, after having gained their confidence, would go about here and there tasting their food, and they would be beside themselves with laughter while I repeated "hiss," "hiss," which means "good," "good." Of course one must eat with the fork which nature has supplied, with the exception of soup which is drunk with the shell of a clam which is very abundant in the surrounding lakes. Where I did almost jeopardize my reputation was once when I had to drink from a vile gourd with a really filthy lip. But I closed my eyes and a few moments later opened them covered with glory, and triumphant.

On that occasion, upon taking our leave, the Indians indicated that they wished to see us fire our rifles and we, to please them, fired two or three times into the air. It was something to hear the yelling of those women, and to see the tumult of boys struggling to pick up the shells. How similar is man in all stages of civilization and age.

I was forgetting to say that the width of the huts is hardly ever greater than the length of a bed.

Chapter IV

The Indian Women

Let us now for a while take up the matter of the Indian women. The Mataco women are generally rather short, but this does not keep them from being, on occasion, quite charming and well formed while they are young [179]. While living among them it is not unusual to see them naked, but in the presence of strangers they never lack a more or less protective fig leaf. On board our ship we had, for a good many days, a man and his wife. The latter wore a pair of shorts such as those we wear when we go bathing, and as she was young and well built and good looking, I can give assurance that the situation was of somewhat questionable benefit to some of our argonauts, forced anchorites as they were.

Even had this difficulty not existed, the social organization 231
of the American nomads made the keeping of domesticated animals well nigh impossible. In [220] effect, and in spite of the fact that one nation might occupy an immense area, yet it would be divided into small tribes who owned sway over relatively small territories and were (as their survivors still are) continually at war amongst themselves. It follows from this that there was no security, which is an indispensable condition for the raising of animals and for any other peaceful occupation. Even at the present time the Chaco Indians, although they are acquainted with our domestic animals and do on occasion try to raise them, do not do so on a worthwhile scale because the mere fact of their possessing them is a temptation for their neighbors to invade and despoil them. If social life had somehow got to the point of compelling these Indians to gather into large groupings, then, given the range of their vast territories and despite their being nomadic and continually at war, it would always have been easy for them to protect their animals, when invaded, by fencing them into inclosures.

Can the Indians of these parts have been cannibals? This is 266
a question which always arises when we have dealings with savages like these.

In America cannibalism has had adherents among "Hebrews and Samaritans," among "Barbarians and Christians." The savage Caribs and the cultured Mexicans topped off the very best dishes of their cuisine with human flesh. The peaceful Peruvians used not to disdain stews of human blood for their religious feast days, in which they would knead corn bread with the blood taken from the foreheads of babes -- what pious butchers were the gentle and beautiful women devotees of that nation's religion.

In this region of the Chaco, although cannibalism may have been practiced, temporibus illis, (which cannot be proved), at the present time it is either non-existent or else must be considered reduced to its very lowest terms. 727

I shall say nothing about the custom of drinking aloja from 264
the scalp of a prisoner which has been converted into a propitiating cup of vengeance and victory.

I have seen them drink avidly of the blood of cattle 262 272
slaughtered for our use, but they do not feed exclusively on cattle

blood or on that of other animals as some have reported; rather 262
do they make their principal diet of fish, game, and the roots 272
and fruits of the field with which, together with wild forest honey
which is so abundant, they prepare the fermented beverages I
have already spoken about.

He who spends any time among the Indians finds cause to 732
marvel at the lack of cripples or maimed people. From this fact
certain travelers have gone on to affirm that the Indians, like
latter day Spartans, kill off their malformed babies. This is also
the opinion of some historians.

[221] I, on the other hand, although confirming the fact
of their being no cripples by my own personal observation, ex-
plain the phenomenon by attributing it to the physical and social
condition in which the Indians live. A more than free life, gen-
erally sufficient food (in spite of what may be said to the con-
trary); the nakedness of the women -- that is, their lack of tight
garments about their waists and breasts; the healthful climate
(for them at least), all are physical elements conducive to the
great rarity of cases of deformity in the body structure of their
babies.

Furthermore, the constant state of war, the frequent sur-
prise attacks, the custom of giving no quarter, the wild beasts
and reptiles, all conspire against the handicapped who are
inferior in the indispensable faculties necessary in the struggle
for existence. In addition to this it is probable that malformed
children are not accorded the privilege granted their normal
peers, that is, that their lives be spared by victorious enemies,
and they be carried off to the latters' villages there to be raised
as members of the kidnapers' group and thus contribute to its
strength and progress.

All this then explains sufficiently the lack of deformed
individuals without the need to attribute to the Indians the habit
of killing newborn babies or allowing them to die. My personal
experience allows me to set down a positive happening which
gives the lie to such a supposition.

In the very center of the Chaco I came upon a deaf-mute
Indian who must have been a little over thirty years of age.
Really, if there is any defect which makes a man completely
useless and deserving of being eliminated from society, this is
it. However, it is true also that it is one of those imperfections

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17

132 the annual rainfall is more abundant and the temperature more equable,
137 we meet with a luxuriant vegetation and almost impenetrable virgin forests. When we pass eastwards this picture gradually changes. Open grass-covered plains dotted with fan palms (*Copernicia cerifera*), which in some places form real palm-groves, are varied by patches of arid deserts with lonely cactuses or with patches of forest, mostly composed of small and scrubby trees which sometimes seem almost impassable by man or beast. Occasionally, however, large forest trees are found. Among these the *Guayacan* (*Caesalpina melanocarpa*), the *Quebracho* (*Quebrachia Lorentzii*), and the *Palo santo* or holywood are well known as fine timber trees. Their iron-hard wood to a certain extent compensates the Chaco Indians for the complete lack of stone in their country, their most important weapons and implements being made of these
134 kinds of wood. It is a remarkable fact that in the pampas regions of the Chaco not the smallest stone can be found within an area of hundreds of square miles; the soil is entirely composed of fine-grained silt, with occasional layers of sand.

262 From an alimental point of view the most common and at the same
273 time most valuable tree is the *algaroba* (*Prosopis alba or juliflora*), which forms real forests. Its pod-like fruit, which is extremely rich in sugar, is very nourishing and in fact feeds thousands of Indians for two or three months of the year. Of this fruit moreover the natives brew their favourite national drink, the algaroba beer, which plays an important part in their social and religious life. Other wild trees of great nutritive value are the *tusca* (*Acacia aroma*), the *chañar* (*Gourliea decortitans*), and the *mistol* (*Sisyphus mistol*), from which also intoxicating fermented drinks are prepared.

314 A plant which is quite common in the thickets of the Chaco and which is very useful, although extremely troublesome to the traveller because of its long thorns, is the *caraguatá* plant (*Bromelia serra*). It is from the fibres of this plant that the Indians twine the thread of which they make their shirts, bags, nets, etc. Its edible root-stocks are also useful.

132 It is the scarcity of rain that stamps the vegetation in the interior of the Chaco, just as it exerts its influence upon the culture of the natives. Thus agriculture can be practised only in a very limited degree. A real rainy season scarcely exists, but the period when rainfalls are more common than at other times of the year — from October to March — is called »summer« in the Chaco. Owing to prolonged rains in the moun-

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Chapter XIII.

Belief in „good spirits".

776 I have so far mainly spoken of such spirits of the Chaco Indians as are regarded as essentially evilly disposed to mankind, being looked upon as the authors of sickness and misfortune. But the religion of these Indians is by no means only a pure demonology. They also assume the existence of »good spirits» and these from a certain point of view are of the greatest interest. The Chaco Indians especially speak of their good spirits with reference to the guardian spirits of the medicine-men and the spirits animating certain plants. With the former I shall deal presently. For the moment a few words may be said of the spirits which are 776 believed to animate the *plants*. Of course, there are also evil or harmful 824 plant spirits. The character of the spirit animating a tree or plant is naturally first of all determined according to the useful or harmful properties of that tree or plant. Thus plants producing poisonous fruits harmful to man, are animated by evil spirits, since the effects are always ascribed to the indwelling spirit, the »soul» of the plant. Likewise, in [754] the cactus thorns, of which malignant sorcerers avail themselves in throwing spells, are animated by evil *nōhsek*, *aittáh*, *peyák*, according to the names different tribes give these demons. Still the Chaco Indians pay special attention to the spirits of such trees or plants as produce edible or otherwise useful fruit, which in a country like Chaco are of essential importance to the inhabitants.

776 Among trees which from an alimental point of view are of great import-824 ance to the Chaco Indians I have mentioned the algaroba, the chañar, 262 and the tusca, the fruits of which ripen in the months October to February. It is particularly these trees which are said to be animated by »good spirits» who control their growth and cause their fruits to ripen.

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

The Tobas call the spirit *peyák noin* or *nōtta*,[1]) the Mataco *aitták slahsa is*, the Choroti *mōhsek eis*, and the Ashluslay *sitché is*. The spirit is thus identical with the vital power or the principle of life in the plants, just as the spirit or spiritual power which animates man is the principle of life and growth in the human body. The same belief is held of cultivated plants such as the pumpkin, maize, manioc, and the water melon. Of these the Tobas at any rate appreciate the water melon most, because from this fruit, just as from the fruits of the wild plants, they brew an intoxicating drink of mysterious power.

The most important of the forest trees is the algaroba, the value of which from an alimental point of view has already been mentioned. The algaroba season begins in November and lasts until the end of January, and is therefore impatiently awaited by the natives, and they try to »hurry on» its coming by various magical means. The Mataco and the Choroti, for instance, are in the habit of beating the drum every night for about one month previous to the commencement of the »season», in order, as they say, to expel the evil demons who prevent the fruit from reaching maturity, but also with a view to directly influencing the spirit (*aitták* or *mōhsek*) which is believed to animate the tree. During the »season» the drum — at any rate among the Choroti — is beaten even in the day-time. Thus, it is believed, the trees will be influenced to continue producing fruit in abundance. The Tobas again, perform a special dance with the same object, beginning some time before the fruit ripens and continuing this ceremonial dance during the whole algaroba season.

But the Chaco Indians not only appreciate the algaroba and other fruits as *food*, but above all because of the *intoxicating drinks* they prepare from them. We should know little of the religion of these Indians if we did not know the religious ideas associated with these sacred drinks and the drinking-feasts, which in the summer months form perhaps the most salient feature of their social life.

The magical power which is commonly ascribed to intoxicating drinks is, according to Indian belief, due to the very spirit which animates the plant and is specially present in its fruit. The plant spirit reaches its highest point of actuality and concentration when the drink brewed from its fruit has fermented, for fermentation is to the Indian

[1]) *Nōtta* (= *noin'ta*) is a comparative form of the word *nóin*, 'good', but is generally used by the Bolivian Tobas in a positive sense. The Argentine Tobas, on the other hand, more commonly use the word *noin*.

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Choroti SK6

CHAPTER XVI.

Ceremonial fasting.

M 785 262 Fasting or restrictions in diet play an important part among the religious practices of the Chaco Indians. In most cases ceremonial fasting seems to be due to the belief that in eating man may come in contact with dangerous disease-bringing spirits which are in some way associated with the food. Since harmful spirits are supposed to have a special liking for certain kinds of food, these kinds of food are in some cases taboo to the Indians. The common belief that the spirits of the dead reincarnate themselves in various animals has in the first place given rise to all sorts of food restrictions, for the meat of such animals is generally, although not invariably, regarded as taboo.

M 262 The Indians of the Gran Chaco, dependent upon very restricted sources of subsistence, as a rule utilize everything that can possibly be used as food. Thus several animals are eaten which we do not regard as fit for food, and if a certain animal is despised, this is, as a rule due to superstitious ideas of one kind or another. The *Choroti* for instance C 262 among other things regard such animals as locusts, certain beetles, lizards, and a kind of rat as delicacies; of others the fox is considered edible, as also of birds the owl and a certain kind of vulture (called *carancho* in Spanish. *Polyborus vulgaris*). In regard to the fox, the owl, [888] and the vulture, however, there is the restriction that only *old* people can eat them, not young people and children, whom such food would do harm. In several cases I received from the younger Choroti men the explanation: »The old ones can eat the meat of this or that animal, not we». This means that such animals or birds as those just mentioned are in some way associated with evil spirits: the eating of the meat of these animals therefore would have disastrous consequences for young people and children who have less power of resistance against evil

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
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this may be, it is now impossible to get a positive explanation from the Indians themselves as to their real motives for observing this ancient custom.

The dietary rules observed by the *Tobas* are in many respects more detailed than those of other Chaco tribes. I have mentioned for instance that when a girl reaches the age of puberty she is bound to fast strictly, being particularly forbidden to eat fish and meat. On the other hand, she is enjoined to eat the leaves of the tusca tree and the leaves and fruit of the vine which the Tobas call *charáde*. These leaves and fruit probably possess some magical properties which are believed to have beneficial effects upon the girl. Dobrizhoffer, speaking of the puberty customs of the ancient Abipones, mentions that the girl had to abstain from fish and meat and was only allowed to feed on »a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood«. By this fruit he evidently meant the *tasi*-fruit (*charáde*) which is eaten on the same occasion by the Toba girls of the present day.

Among the Tobas and the Mataco, and probably also among the Choroti, a woman is always bound to diet during her menstrual periods, since she is at these periods more or less exposed to supernatural dangers. The Toba woman carefully abstains from eating fish, and her only food is a dish prepared of boiled maize and called *euóhi* in the Toba language. An infringement of these rules would be likely to bring about the terrible consequences which have been mentioned above. Similarly, when a child has been born in a family, both the father and the mother of the child must live on a restricted diet.

Again, after a Toba man has died, his widow, daughter, and other female relatives carefully avoid eating fish. If they infringe this rule, they will, according to the belief of the Tobas, sicken and die or go mad. Instead of fish, maize is eaten. Even some of the men observe the same custom, abstaining from fish for some time after the death of a relative.

All these food restrictions are, no doubt, based upon the same idea, namely, that evil spirits may hide in the forbidden food and gain entrance into the body if it is eaten. At any rate spirits are in some way associated with the food. With regard to the fish this is expressly stated. It is a curious fact that fish, which is the principal food of the Tobas, is so religiously shunned on certain occasions. Behind this superstition there are undoubtedly real experiences as to the harmful effects that the eating of fish may bring. Thus the Tobas assert that incautious

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eating of fish at the beginning of the wet season is likely to cause malarial fever. What is particularly dangerous in the fish, as the Indians told me, is the stomach; an evil spirit may hide in it. Therefore a person must abstain from eating this kind of food when he or she is in a delicate condition and exposed to the attacks of supernatural enemies. After a death it is the death-demon that is believed to have possibly taken up its abode in the stomach of the fish. In general, the rules of diet, both in regard to fish and in regard to other kinds of food, are always more strict for the women than for the men, and this is naturally due to the belief that the former have by nature less power of resistance against evil spirits than the latter.

Several other food restrictions exist among the Chaco tribes, and most of them are due to superstitious ideas of one kind or another. Just as the Choroti shun the meat of the deer, so I found among the Toba men an aversion to the meat of the wild pig, although this is a very tasty food. This may possibly be due to the idea that the wild pig is a »female» animal, as is also the armadillo. At any rate the Tobas have the belief that the souls of women particularly reincarnate themselves in the wild pig. All Chaco Indians likewise have an aversion to drinking the blood or milk of animals and eating the eggs of hens and of other birds. The Indians could give me no explanation as to this superstition, and it is possible that the original reasons for it are now forgotten. It is, however, highly probable that they shun blood and milk because they believe that the spirit or soul of the animal is in them. This is at any rate quite obvious with regard to blood, which plays an important part in native superstition. Thus among all tribes there appears a mysterious dread of shedding the blood of domestic animals. The Choroti for instance, when they have to slaughter a sheep or goat, never kill the animal by cutting its throat or shedding its blood in some other way, but always, according to old observance, by strangulation. The custom is professedly observed for fear of coming in contact with the blood of the animal. — For a similar reason, I believe, the Indians have originally abstained from eating eggs. The egg is the embryo of the bird, and in the embryo or foetus of an animal, according to primitive belief, its spirit has its abode in the same way as in its blood or milk. It is interesting in this connection to note what Mr. Grubb says of the analogous ideas of the Lenguas. »Milk, whether of the cow, goat, sheep, or mare, is never drunk. The older people seem to consider it unfit for them, and children are forbidden it because it is supposed that the milk upon which they

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171 are nourished will influence them physically as well as in character, and the Indians have no desire that their children should in any way acquire the natures of such animals.[1])

262 826 774 The fear of eating the *heads* of certain animals is probably due to similar ideas. A menstruous woman, as we have seen, is forbidden to eat the head of a parrot, lest she should go mad or be changed into a tiger; and similarly a father, while he is observing the rules of the couvade, must abstain from eating the head of a cow. According to primitive belief the soul or vital power of the body is particularly concentrated in the hair and the head. That the head of a cow is especially regarded as taboo is comprehensible from the fact that animals imported by the whites are generally looked upon with superstitious fear and their flesh avoided by Indians still living in a state of nature.

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[1]) Grubb, *op. cit.* p. 137.

a) *Conception*

831 Sperm is located in the knee. In order to cause an abundant secretion of sperm, it is advisable to drink broth and
262 milk and to eat chickens. It is important not to drink the broth of a bird called *čana* for the child would then be lazy. In order to have healthy children it is highly recommended that the broth of an aquatic bird called *aṣkan* be drunk;
842 The child is formed by the sperm which is assimilated into milk. The »milk» coagulates and fills up the matrix, thus do children form themselves gradually. The presence of the child in a mother's womb prevents the blood from
[843] flowing and menstruation stops. Pregnancy lasts eight months.

842 It is impossible for a man not to procreate children. Only
789 women can be sterile. Sterility may occur because the woman has been stopped up by a medicine-man, thus man's »milk» can no longer penetrate into her bosom. This may be accounted for in two ways. A woman may ask a medicine-man to make her sterile, or a bad medicine-man may make a woman sterile in order to harm her family. Sterility may be cured by a medicine-man, but the task is not easy and there are few who will attempt it.

b) *Pregnancy and Childbirth*

843 A pregnant woman works but little, she most eat sufficient, but not too much, food. The child, still in the mother's womb, sucks the food absorbed by its father and mother and if they were to eat too much the child would get fat and would be unable to come out. The husband of an expectant mother must give up certain kinds or work. He cannot use a knife or an axe for the strokes of any cutting instrument might kill or wound the child. He must not wear boots lest the child's legs be crooked. If he keeps his hat on his head the skull of the child will be flat. He must not write with ink lest the child's face be covered with marks.

845 A child born dead is buried immediately without any cere-
766 mony. It is considered as waste matter just as is the placenta. On the other hand, if the child dies after having lived for a few hours it is buried according to the traditional funeral rites.

846 After the birth of their child both father and mother continue
●262 to take various precautions of a magical nature in order not to undermine the child's health. They abstain from certain foods, among others, from the flesh of the tatú [type of armadillo--Translator] and of the iguana. All infractions of food "tabus" will cause the child to have stomach trouble. Certain "tabus" last from one to two years.
834 The husband abstains from all sexual intercourse with his wife until such time as the baby has teeth.

Some practices have, in the Indians' opinion, the magical
856 power of influencing the child's growth. Thus, the parents may ask a woman who has beautiful hair to cut off a lock and rub their little daughter's head with it. A person whose limbs are very well shaped will be asked to massage the legs of a child In general, parents are pleased when well formed persons take their baby in arms to communicate their good looks.

852 A woman will feed only her own child and refuses to breast feed any other baby. Nevertheless one can see, on occasion, grandmothers giving the breast to a baby, but this is only to [11] pacify them and not to nourish them as some assert. When the child is about a year old, his mother chews up grains of boiled corn and introduces
[862] this paste, with her fingers, into the little one's mouth. In order to pacify their babies, whom my presence frightened, the mothers would keep feeding them continually. Likewise when a child would make a fuss in church, its mother would start by patting it gently and saying "hush," "hush," "hush" to it in order to calm it down, but if this measure did not bring about the necessary effect she would put it to breast.

855 I do not remember ever seeing a man or a woman mistreat a child. The following episode, which I observed in a Mataco village, may be considered typical. A little child about two years old was screaming madly without apparent cause. His mother jumped him up and down on her knees in the hope of pacifying him; then she closed his mouth with her hand. As the little fellow continued to scream

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estos indios que están acosados por una situación económica de día en día más difícil y que fuera de las misiones están sometidos a múltiples vejámenes y humillaciones. No obstante no se han observado crisis de suicidio entre los demás indios del Chaco argentino que viven bajo condiciones igualmente desfavorables. Hay también indicios de que los casos de suicidio eran comunes al principio de la era de las misiones y esto puede hacernos suponer que el suicidio era la expresión tradicional de la agresión en contra de los miembros de su grupo contra los cuales el individuo no podía vengarse en otra forma. El ejemplo dado por un suicida se hace contagioso y de allí nacen epidemias esporádicas de envenenamiento.

762 The high rate of suicide among the Matako Indians of the Argentine Gran Chaco is a social phenomenon well worth our attention. In this tribe suicide at times assumes the character of an epidemic that causes havoc among the people and is a serious problem for the [197] English missionaries who have several stations along the Bermejo and Pilcomayo Rivers. To these missionaries, especially to Dr. Collins [115] Smith and J. White, I am indebted for most of my information on the suicidal mania that has flared up on several occasions during the past ten years. Personally, I have witnessed only one case. Information about suicide among the Matako who live in the bush or as miserable hilotes around the white settlements is not available, but there is little doubt that if the Matako in the missions are so prone to take their lives, those who find themselves exposed to hunger and mistreatment will be even more inclined to end their days wilfully.

Suicide among the Matako takes a strictly patternized form. In all cases known to me, the victims poisoned themselves by eating the [824] fruits of the sachasandia (Capparis salicifolia Griseb). This fruit, the size of a walnut, grows on a tree which is very common in the Chaco region between the Bermejo and Pilcomayo Rivers. It ripens in December, the period which coincides with the largest number of ●262 suicides. Strangely enough, the sachasandia is also an important food for the chaco Indians; it is collected in the summer, dried in 251 the sun and stored in caraguata bags to be consumed during the lean winter months. Even dried these fruits are extremely poisonous and 252 before eating them the Indians boil them six or seven times in different waters.

762 The clinical symptoms of sachasandia poisoning are: convulsions, 764 foaming at the mouth and, finally, coma. The heart beat becomes jerky with short stops and upsurges of activity. The muscles of the throat are affected with paralysis and the patient makes a gurgling sound. When paralysis sets in, no emitic can be taken orally. The last phase of the agony is characterized by jumpy motions of the body